

Since 1987, I have been employed as a TV Videographer for each of the two TV stations in Eau Claire, WI. During the 80's and 90's, I witnessed massive "towerkill" at the WEAU TV tower, particularly during September, when fall songbird migration was at its peak.

On mornings after nights with low cloud cover, I would show up for work and find the TV station property littered with the bodies of dead or wounded birds. On one occasion in 1994 I actually collected and counted up both the total dead birds and the number of species killed from JUST the ROOF of the station – and found a total of 244 birds of 32 species, predominantly Swainson's Thrush, Red-eyed Vireo, and assorted species of wood warblers. On other mornings, I estimated the dead birds on roof and grounds combined at twice that amount or more, though many of the carcasses were often scavenged by crows and sometimes gulls beginning at first light.

As a birder and conservationist I found it heartbreaking to witness these kinds of occurrences. However, I find it even more distressing that as these events continued over the years, the numbers of dead birds actually DROPPED. NOT because of changes made to the tower, but due to unknown causes. In other words, though birds continued to strike the tower, there appeared to be LESS of them each year. While no one I know can prove it, it is my unscientific opinion that there are simply less and less migrant birds each year passing through Eau Claire.

With that in mind, I believe it's critical that we address each of the stressors facing migrating birds very seriously. My quality of life is directly influenced by the presence of wild birds. Their song, diversity and color add joy to my experience of living in Wisconsin, and their natural place in wild systems contributes to a healthy ecosystem. If there's something – anything – we can do to relieve the pressure on bird populations, it's our responsibility to follow through.

Sincerely,  
Steve Betchkal  
Eau Claire, WI